



## Trooper

### James M. "Jim" Froemsdorf

Badge #261

10-42 ... March 2, 1985

On the evening of March 2, 1985, at approximately 1755 hours, a tragic event occurred at the 134-mile marker, on northbound Interstate 55, in Perry County, Troop C. This tragic incident adversely affected the lives of a close-knit Patrol family, members of the Patrol, and an entire rural community. The event was the cold-blooded murder/execution of Trooper James M. Froemsdorf, a nine-year veteran of the Missouri State Highway Patrol. The perpetrator of this heinous crime was career criminal Jerome Mallet.

Tpr. Froemsdorf's photograph is displayed in each troop headquarters across the state, along with photos of our other fallen brothers of the Patrol. His name appears on the police memorial walls in Washington, D.C., and Jefferson City. Other than seeing his picture or reading his name on one of the walls, many of our members, both young and old, never had the opportunity to know Tpr. Froemsdorf as an individual.

I had the honor and privilege to work with Jim and to share his friendship on a daily basis. I would like to take this opportunity to share with you this man's fine attributes and characteristics, so that his accomplishments and contributions on Earth will be preserved for many generations.

Tpr. Jim Froemsdorf was a dedicated husband and father. He possessed strong family values and cherished his children. Like most young troopers, he had the normal financial burdens associated with everyday life, but managed to be a good provider and lived within his family's means. Sarah, his wife, worked and pursued a higher education in nursing. Jim's three young daughters, Teri, Kim, and Amy, participated in community activities such as cheerleading and Brownies.

Tpr. Froemsdorf was an individual who enjoyed life and was a man of his word. He was the senior trooper in the zone, and his opinion was often sought and valued by younger zone members. He was never flamboyant in anything he did and often downplayed his accomplishments and abilities. Jim was a veteran of the Vietnam War and had served in an infantry unit during the late '60s. There is no doubt he was exposed to many horrors of war, but was the type of man who never talked or bragged about his experiences. I can only recall one time that he discussed any specific events he had endured during his service.

Although Jim was at times a quiet and reserved man, he had a sense of humor and was quite capable of playing practical jokes. For instance, there was a time that he and another zone member (who will remain anonymous due to the fact that he is now the director of the Research and Development Division.) re-arranged all of the furniture and file cabinets in the zone office, including the zone sergeant's desk,

while the sergeant was away on vacation. When the sergeant returned to duty and demanded to know who was responsible for moving his furniture without his approval, Tpr. Froemsdorf came forward and immediately gave him the names of former Trooper Gary Wilson and me!

One of Jim's favorite jokes was what he referred to as "buzzing" me. Everybody in the zone knew that my favorite "fishing hole" was parking on the ramp to southbound Interstate 55, at the Route Z interchange, near the Ste. Genevieve and Perry counties line, and conducting a stationary radar operation with my Speedgun 8. Late at night, a southbound passenger car would often "break the beam" at 100+ miles per hour. I would practically tear the transmission out of my patrol car as I wound through the gears to chase down the speeding offender, only to crest a hill and discover Jim's semi-marked patrol car parked on the shoulder with his lights off. After I would turn around, and approach him in his car, I would always become infuriated when I would hear the laughter

coming from within. I was my own worst enemy, because I would fall for the same tactic about once every six months.

In addition to associating with Jim on duty, we often got together off duty. While raising children, we never had enough money to participate in any extravagant outings, but we enjoyed doing trivial things such as cutting wood, target practicing, taking our families to Show Biz Pizza Place in Cape Girardeau, and just having "get-togethers". During these times, I had the opportunity to share thoughts, beliefs, and values with Jim.

Without breaching the confidences he and I shared as friends, there are a few of my observations I would like to relate. Jim was like all of us; he was not without faults. However, he was a sincere individual who had no hidden agendas and led a meaningful, spiritual life. He demonstrated compassion for individuals he encountered, and was well respected in the community. He always had a "soft heart", as reflected by the number of stray dogs



*Sarah Froemsdorf unveils a sign during the ceremony to rename a portion of Interstate 55 the Trooper James Froemsdorf Memorial Highway in 2002.*



*The Froemsdorf family celebrates at the 79th Recruit Class graduation in 2002. The uniform worn by Trooper Jim Froemsdorf's granddaughter was made from one of his old uniforms.*

he was always bringing home and adopting.

I always referred to Jim as "the peace keeper", while we were on the road. He had a low and mild temperament and would often "bail" me out of a confrontational situation as it quickly escalated. On the other hand, he was an excellent backup officer and was capable of taking care of a volatile incident.

I, personally, feel very blessed to have enjoyed Jim's friendship. I admired the man and I admired the things he believed in and stood for. If I were ever going to mold myself into the image of another human being, that person would be Jim Froemsdorf. He has instilled values in me that have given me the desire and inspiration to strive to become a better man, and I hope that I have instilled similar values to others along life's path.

I urge all Patrol employees to stop at the town square in Perryville and visit the monument the citizens of Perry County have erected on the courthouse lawn. The words engraved on the monument are:

"Dedicated in Recognition of Jim Froemsdorf, Trooper 261, and Our Missouri State Highway Patrol, May 15, 1985."

In addition to this tribute, though it is years after the incident, the 134-mile post on northbound I-55 still displays flowers, wreaths, handwritten poems, and related notes from passing motorists in memory of Tpr. Froemsdorf. These tributes speak volumes for the high esteem and respect our citizens possess for the Missouri State Highway Patrol. It is because of the dedication and sacrifices of our predecessors, such as Tpr. Froemsdorf, we are able to enjoy the excellent reputation you and I share today.

*(This article first appeared in the March 2000 issue of the Patrol News, to remember Tpr. Jim Froemsdorf on the 15th anniversary of his death. Lt. Randy Becker, Troop I, is now Captain Becker and the commanding officer of Troop I. The RDD director mentioned is currently a major and commander of Technical Services Bureau.)*